

May 31, 2006**CHIEF ACADEMIC AFFILIATIONS OFFICER'S INFORMATION LETTER****ETHICS TRAINING FOR PHYSICIAN RESIDENTS**

1. This Information Letter, issued by the Office of Academic Affiliations in conjunction with the Office of General Counsel, clarifies the January 30, 2006, memorandum issued by the Undersecretary for Health regarding annual ethics training for “all part time and full time physicians in training.”
2. The training of physician residents in ethics is extremely important and should be considered a core Graduate Medical Education competency, meeting both Professionalism and Systems-based Practice standards. In addition to health care ethics training that is relevant to their assignment and status, physician residents in the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), as employees of the Federal government, also need training regarding two specific content areas related to Federal government ethics rules and VA policy: relationships with pharmaceutical representatives and the acceptance of gifts from outside sources. Methods of training will, of necessity, be flexible because of the nature of resident schedules and duties.
3. Training and resources in health care ethics are available from many academic and professional sources. Pertinent resources and links are provided on the website of VHA’s National Center for Ethics in Health Care (see <http://vaww1.va.gov/vhaethics>.)
4. The following methods may be used to fulfill the training requirements for governmental ethics required by Federal government ethics rules and VA policy:
 - a. The “Ethics Most Wanted” video, edited to the two vignettes relevant to above-mentioned content areas. (This video is available at <http://vaww.vakncdn.lrn.va.gov/default.asp>.) The Office of General Counsel is responsible for this video’s content.
 - b. Handouts, booklets, or training aids from the Office of Government Ethics website covering relevant content, such as “Brief Wrap on Ethics,” pages 7-9, or the training aid “Gifts From Outside Sources (1998),” both found at http://www.usoge.gov/pages/forms_pubs_otherdocs/forms_pubs_other.html
 - c. Web-based training from the Office of Government Ethics website or other Federal agency websites, such as http://www.usoge.gov/pages/comp_web_trng/comp_web_trng.html
5. On the subject of relationships with industry, the following materials may be used:
 - a. Relevant training aids (booklets, handouts and web-based training) from the American Medical Association, such as may be found at <http://www.ama-assn.org/ama/pub/category/5689.html> on “Ethical guidelines for gifts to physicians from industry.” At the AMA website, four free educational modules may be accessed or downloaded. The educational modules (including educator resources) are:

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- (1) Overview of Ethical, Professional, and Legal Issues for Physicians' Relationships with Industry
 - (2) Physicians' Expectations of Industry and Sales Personnel
 - (3) Professionalism and Gifts to Physicians from Industry
 - (4) American Medical Association Ethical Guidelines on Gifts to Physicians from Industry
- b. Relevant academic journal articles may also be the basis for training and group discussion. Please note the recent journal articles published in the Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA) and Academic Medicine on these topics:
- (1) "Guidelines for Interactions between Clinical Faculty and the Pharmaceutical Industry: One Medical School's Approach." David L. Coleman, MD, Alan E. Kazdin, PhD, Lee Ann Miller, MS, RPh, Jon S. Morrow, MD, PhD, and Robert Udelesman, MD, MBA. Academic Medicine. 2006; 81:154–160.
 - (2) "Health Industry Practices that Create Conflicts of Interest: A Policy Proposal for Academic Medical Centers." Troyen A. Brennan, MD, JD, MPH, David J. Rothman, PhD, Linda Blank, David Blumenthal, MD, PhD, Susan C. Chimonas, PhD, Jordan J. Cohen, MD, Janlori Goldman, JD, Jerome P. Kassirer, MD, Harry Kimball, MD, James Naughton, MD, and Neil Smelser, PhD. JAMA, January 25, 2006-Vol 295(4), pages 429-433.
- c. Relevant VA policies and publications include:
- (1) Directive 2003-060, "Business Relationships Between VHA Staff and Pharmaceutical Industry Representatives." Available at
http://vaww1.va.gov/vhapublications/ViewPublication.asp?pub_ID=288.
 - (2) VHA National Center for Ethics report: "Gifts to Health Care Professionals From the Pharmaceutical Industry" (October 2003). Available at
http://vaww1.va.gov/vhaethics/download/Pharma_2003.doc
 - (3) VHA National Center for Ethics report: "Compensation to Health Care Professionals from the Pharmaceutical Industry: (February 2006). Available at
http://vaww1.va.gov/vhaethics/download/Compensation_2006.pdf
6. The Office of Academic Affiliations is available for consultation to Networks and VA Medical Centers wishing to develop customized training materials to meet the needs of particular trainee groups.

7. For questions and comments concerning this information letter, please contact Dr. Karen Sanders, Acting Deputy, Office of Academic Affiliations. Dr. Sanders may be reached by email at karen.sanders@va.gov, or by phone at 804-675-5249.

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